

# Growing in FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

October 2020

St. Michael's Faith Formation

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## One Minute Meditations

### True happiness

Popular theologian C.S. Lewis wrote, "Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth thrown in. Aim at Earth and you get neither." We were made for God and can't be truly happy unless we are united with him. If we focus on worldly concerns, we will never know the meaning of true happiness. If we focus on God, we will know happiness even on Earth.

### The Commandment imbalance

Of the Ten Commandments, only the first three address how we are to respect the Creator of the universe.

The other seven detail how we are to treat each other. It is one way God lets us know how much he wants us to love one another.

### Silence of the heart

"In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence." Mother Teresa of Calcutta

## "Live in harmony with one another"

In times of uncertainty or stress, tempers can shorten, perspectives narrow, and peace suffers. It is important to remember that Jesus came to bring love and unity. His followers are asked to do the same.

*"The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all"* (Proverbs 22:2) – embrace diversity, don't just tolerate it. Different as we are, we are all made in God's image and likeness. There is great diversity in the communion of saints.

*"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"* (1 John 4:11) – as children of God, all humans were created with inherent dignity that we are required to acknowledge.

Trying to understand others' perspectives is the best way to realize the impact of our actions on them.

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"*

(Matthew 5:9) – a steady diet of violent entertainment and media helps us become comfortable with violence and to see people as characters rather than humans.

Instead, live with peace and pray for victims of violence.

*"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts"* (Colossians 3:15). This means we have to make the choice to trust God's promises (letting His peace rule) or to rely on ourselves and reject the peace He offers.

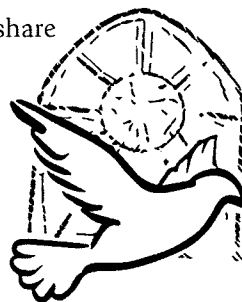


## Why Do Catholics Do That?

God gives us a free gift to share in His life, a gift that we can't earn and don't deserve. Called, "grace," this gift helps us to become His adopted children. When God shares His divine life with us as sanctifying grace, we

## What is grace?

are strengthened to act in His love. Through actual grace, God strengthens us to live in harmony with His will. Sacramental and special graces – gifts of the Holy Spirit – help us to live out our Christian vocation.

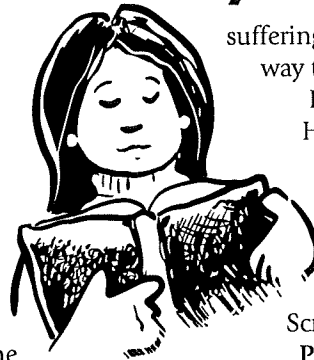


## Make holiness your goal

All people are called to be holy, "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Achieving holiness requires a constant effort like climbing a mountain. To stop trying, even for a little while, is to lose ground. Daily effort will pay off with results.

**Look for Jesus' presence.** Search for Him each day. Not only will awareness of His presence help you grow in love and kindness toward everyone, you will find it easier to control your faults.

**Don't avoid suffering.** Jesus experienced extreme



suffering in His time on Earth and used it to pave our way to Heaven.

**Pay attention to His voice.** Speak to Him, ask Him for help, express sorrow for your mistakes, tell Him you love Him.

**Nurture your faith.** Just as food nourishes our bodies, faith feeds our souls. Scripture is a staple of our spiritual diet. Ask for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to meditate on Scripture every day.

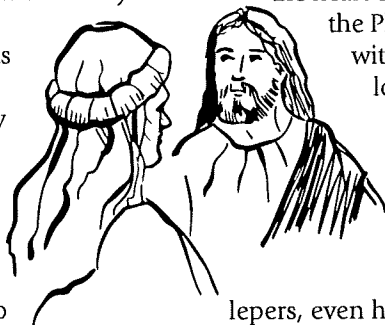
**Practice patience.** It's the first step toward holiness.

### from Scripture

### Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus has the right answers.

In their first meeting with Jesus, the Pharisees attempted to trap him into publicly contradicting Jewish law by sending a slick lawyer to "engage" him. Then Jesus could be arrested and silenced. The lawyer they sent knew that generations of Jews had debated fruitlessly about which law was the most important. Pretending to seek Jesus' opinion, he asked him to choose which of the 613 commandments of the Jewish law was the most important.

Jesus silenced them by saying that everything starts and ends with love –



love of God and love of others. To love God is to love one another. Love is at the heart of all the other laws. Even the Pharisees couldn't argue with that. While it is easy to love God, loving others is more difficult. It means including those our natural inclination says to exclude or avoid. Jesus loved prostitutes, thieves, lepers, even his political enemies.

True love of neighbor is measured by how we treat the poor, the vulnerable, and our enemies. This is how God loves and he calls us to the same.

### Q & A How can I develop more faith?

Faith is not a single event or a mastered skill. It's a journey that develops and grows over time. A father asking Jesus for a miraculous cure for his son cried out, "I do believe, help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). We have to ask God to help our faith develop and grow.



The best way to develop a strong faith is to pray.

Prayer is a conversation with God. Most of us use prayer to talk at God, but it's important to listen, too.

One good way to listen to God is to read his Word in the Bible. Start by reading a passage from Scripture, particularly the Gospels. Then ask yourself what the passage is saying to you, personally.

For example, ask yourself, "What is God saying to me through this reading?" Or "How can I put his message into practice in my life?" We need to meditate on the message and put it into action in our lives. Only then can the word be "living and effective" (Hebrews 4:12).

### Feasts & Celebrations

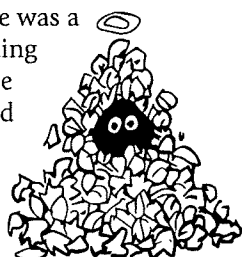
In October we celebrate the Rosary with the feast of **Our Lady of the Rosary on October 7th**. The Rosary helps us meditate on the mysteries of our salvation – Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection.

**Oct. 15 - St. Teresa of Avila (1583).** St. Teresa founded a strict religious order whose nuns wore rough brown habits and sandals instead of shoes. St. Teresa established more than 17 convents of Discalced Carmelites and helped reform the Carmelite friars.

**Oct. 17 – St. Ignatius of Antioch**

(1st century). Succeeded St. Peter as the second bishop of Antioch, St. Ignatius encouraged obedience to the world's bishops and reminded people that Jesus is present in the Church and in each other.

**Oct. 28 – St. Simon and St. Jude (1st century).** St. Simon was a Zealot – Jews who believed that the Messiah would free them from political oppression. St. Jude was a fisherman. After being called by Jesus to be apostles, they ended up in Persia where they evangelized until they were martyred.



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